

Times **Your Community**

## Stewards of our streets

By Councilmember Rose Herrera  
*Special to the Times*

Nicely landscaped city streets and medians make a big difference in how we view our neighborhood. Yet, it comes as no surprise that street landscaping and maintenance budgets have been affected by the city's deficit. It's shocking to many that the city has had to cut back on something so basic. We all can agree that well maintained streetscapes make for a beautiful community and a solution was needed.

In recent years, the condition of the city's landscaping has significantly declined, and may continue to decline in the coming years. Plus, the miles of city roads requiring landscaping has increased while funding and staffing for maintenance has declined for nine consecutive. It is unacceptable to simply abandon the road-sides and median islands across 180 square miles of San Jose. And that's where the city's Department of Transportation (DOT) developed creative solutions to maintain our streetscapes.

Committed to San Jose and trying to maintain the quality of life we all expect, DOT developed three proactive, creative solutions that are aimed at keeping and improving conditions as we face unknown hurdles.

### Adopt-A-Street

I am passionate about promoting the volunteer spirit in our district. The Adopt-A-Street program helps coordinate neighbors who are interested in improving certain streets. Adopting a street is a proactive way to meet your neighbors, which is a great way to keep blight and crime under control. Evergreen resident Mike Ivey says he volunteers because "it keeps our neighborhood looking nice, and therefore keeps our home values up. It has been neat to meet new people in our neighborhood and get together with them every month or two to work on a community activity. I feel like I'm more part of the community, and doing something about it instead of just talking about it."

In these tough budget times, amazing neighbors like Mr. Ivey are inspiring to me. My thanks to him and his neighbors for adopting a street and keeping Evergreen a great place to live.

Whether you are interested in making a long term commitment to maintain existing landscape areas or joining a one-time clean-up event, the city needs your help. Several areas have been formally adopted, and other adoptions are expected to be finalized before the end of the fiscal year, which is June 2011. In District 8, volunteers are needed in the following areas to keep the current level of maintenance:

**Brigadoon Way:** Southwest Corner at Aborn Road

**Murillo Avenue:** Tully Court to Norwood Avenue

**Quimby Road:** Ruby Avenue to Lovewood Way

**Ruby Avenue:** Whitesand Drive to

Apperson Ridge; south of Holderman Avenue; and north of Chapala Avenue

**San Felipe Road:** West side of street at The Villages Parkway; Delta Road to Bowerey Lane; at Lyter Way (both sides of the wall)

**White Road:** Southeast corner of Tully Road

**Yerba Buena Road:** Highway 101 to McLaughlin Avenue

Sign up! For more information on adopting a street, visit <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/transportation/adopt-a-street.asp> or call Phyllis Schulz (408) 975-7174.

### Landscape conversion

We all love beautiful flowers and shrubs. But we also are becoming increasingly aware of the amount of water those non-native plants need. Maintenance costs are also unbearably high for ornamental median strips and street landscaping. In 2008, the DOT spent \$1.7 million to fund a multi-year conversion effort to reduce the acres of demanding landscaping throughout the city. Now, areas are planted with trees and non-living ground cover, like gravel. These efforts make future maintenance much simpler and less costly.

I commend DOT for finding a solution that is good for the planet and good for the budget. Prior to the conversion effort, the city had 745 separate General Fund water accounts. To date, 265 of these accounts, or 35 percent, have been closed, resulting in an ongoing reduction in water expenditures. Those numbers are impressive. We all love seeing such concrete progress in reducing our city's overhead costs.

### Special Districts

Special Districts are areas where landscaping maintenance is funded through a special tax on adjacent property owners. In District 8, special districts include The Meadowlands, Silvercreek Valley, and Evergreen Specific. Creating additional special districts could improve street landscaping in concentrated, high-profile areas.

These districts are created after exhaustive reviews for a weighted ballot process (based on the proposed assessment) for all affected property owners. The DOT is doing a great job at reaching out to larger property owners to gauge interest. The systematic approach is refreshing after the relative chaos of the budget process.

Time after time, we see that the greatest progress comes when the city works closely with the citizens who call San Jose home. I urge you to join our District 8 volunteers, as we continue to improve our neighborhoods. My thanks to all the residents that have already stepped up and volunteered to maintain a roadside or median island.

Don't miss out! Get the District 8 newsletter delivered to your inbox! Sign up at [www.sanjoseca.gov/district8](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/district8)

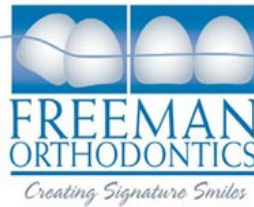
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### District 8 Report

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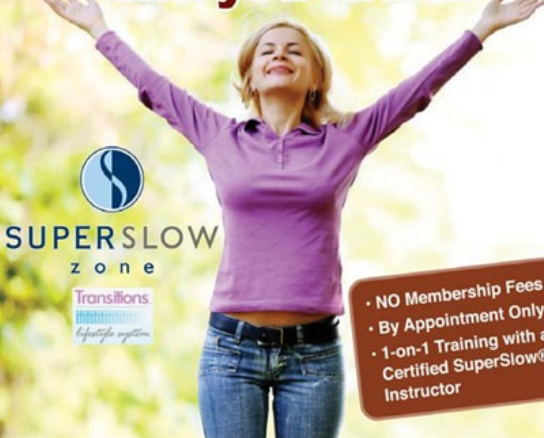
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